

Provo, UDOT agree on new I-15 Center Street interchange design

Michael Rigert - Daily Herald | Posted: Wednesday, May 5, 2010 10:13 am

A significant design change of the Provo Center Street freeway interchange was hammered out in recent weeks by state transportation officials, contractors and Provo, and that has Mayor John Curtis smiling.

Provo city officials expressed concerns months ago about the initial so-called rotary design that was presented as part of the Interstate 15 reconstruction project's 24-mile rebuild through Utah County.

But collaboration between the three entities led to a compromise hybrid version of the rotary design called a modified diamond exchange that will improve traffic flow and address the area's unique topography and existing infrastructure, said Utah Department of Transportation I-15 CORE spokeswoman Heather Barnum.

The announcement was made Tuesday at the Provo Municipal Council meeting.

"The new design is a fabulous design," Curtis said. "We have a design that will foster future development plans -- revitalizing this area of our community with improved access and mobility."

Dal Hawks, UDOT's I-15 CORE project director, said UDOT, Provo and Provo River Contractors -- the conglomerate of contractors working on the \$1.725 billion I-15 rebuild -- spent a considerable amount of time on the new design to come up with a solution that would work for all three.

Specifically Curtis and Provo officials were concerned about a lack of access to properties off of Draper Road in the original rotary design, an area the city has pegged for future development. The new modified diamond design solves that limitation.

"It will open an area for development that previously had no access," Curtis said.

The modified diamond design will allow the project to remain on schedule and will not incur any additional costs from the original project budget, Barnum said. It features familiar transitions and improved east-west access while increasing the capacity and efficiency of the current interchange infrastructure.

The one concession in the new design is that portions of the interchange will have to be closed temporarily for 90-day periods during I-15 reconstruction. Exact details about the schedule of closures and the finer points of the interchange layout are still being finalized.

Provo and Orem officials had also wanted the project's design to straighten out the S-curves between the Provo Center Street and University Parkway exits as presented in an environmental-

impact study about two and a half years ago. City officials preferred the design because it eliminated what they felt was a dangerous stretch of freeway.

According to Utah Highway Patrol records between October 2000 and October 2009, there were 1,539 accidents on I-15 between University Parkway and Provo Center Street exits. Provo and Orem emergency services respond to calls on the freeway, along with UHP. The two cities, UDOT and the contractors are currently still in discussions about potential design changes for the S-curves.

Initial reconstruction on the length of freeway between the two S-curves between University Parkway and the Provo Center Street is slated to begin later this week.

For more information on upcoming I-15 CORE closures, alternate routes and schedules, sign up for weekly updates online at udot.utah.gov/i15core.